

# News from Ed Markey

**United States Congress**

**Massachusetts Seventh District**

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## **U.S. PROLIFERATION OF NUCLEAR MATERIALS TO JAPAN UNNECESSARY, UNSUPPORTED**

*Markey says shipment of depleted uranium exposes material to theft by terrorists*

**Washington, DC**—Representative Edward J. Markey (D-MA), a senior member of the House Energy and Commerce Committee and Co-Chair of the Bipartisan Congressional Task Force on Non-Proliferation, today released a letter to Nuclear Regulatory Commission Chairman Richard Meserve regarding the intended shipment of depleted uranium from the United States to Japan.

“While Japan is a reliable ally,” Markey noted, “this particular shipment raises serious questions about the rigor we intend to apply to requests for the export of dangerous materials during the war on terrorism. On its face, the application is insufficiently justified. As long as we live in a world where Al Qaeda is seeking material for dirty bombs, we should be loathe to ship the key ingredients for such weapons of terror to any nation without a clear and pressing need that cannot be met in any less-risky way.”

The depleted uranium would be shipped to a Japanese reprocessing plant designed to convert uranium from nuclear power plants into mixed plutonium-uranium oxide (MOX) fuels rods. Japan currently has no nuclear power plants that can use MOX fuel. Reprocessing would result in an ever-growing stockpile of extremely toxic, dangerously radioactive material that has no practical purpose.

The United States is obligated under the 1998 US-Japan Agreement for Cooperation Concerning Peaceful Uses of Nuclear Energy to provide substantial security for all nuclear materials. The application to ship this material mentions no safeguards or security precautions during shipment or after reprocessing. Without such security, the uranium could be dangerously open to theft by terrorist organizations.

Rep. Markey’s letter asked Chairman Meserve the following questions:

- What guarantees are there that this material will not be stolen or diverted, either while on route to the reprocessing facility or once it arrives there?
- How does this shipment affect the nonproliferation obligations of the U.S.?

“Shipping depleted uranium to Japan violates two fundamental taboos. It lets dangerously radioactive materials out of U.S. control, and it encourages the creation of even larger stockpiles of even more dangerously radioactive materials,” stated Rep. Markey. “Why are we even thinking of creating such a tempting target for terrorists?”

This and all other correspondence may be found on Rep. Markey’s website at [www.house.gov/markey](http://www.house.gov/markey).